

# Science of Fiction (new version)

By Peter David Smith

*Many months ago I wrote this humour piece called "Science of Fiction". The idea of it was to write in a series of different and confusing styles, changing style as it goes along and attempting to emulate the writing of Dark Fairy Tales, Angela Carter, Gurdjieff, James Joyce, Terry Pratchett and whoever or whatever I could manage to cram into a very short stream of consciousness. Now here's a newer version containing some even more confusing offences against literature.*

In a library near the galactic centre, an alien being who likes to be known as "Prospero" browses through his galactic library of extinct cultures.

Prospero tries to understand the cultures which produced these books and artforms. He is particularly puzzled by the Human race who were once one of the most advanced species on the planet Earth.

Planet Earth enjoyed the work of many strange creative people and, amongst the remains of all those works, Prospero finds the books written by Norman Gates.

Prospero puzzles over a particular book called "The Book of Gates". There are several different versions of "The Book of Gates" and Prospero isn't sure that they have all been written by the same human. Some versions are much older than the others and the content varies incredibly.

Here and there are references to a house which contains all houses and a house which is the door to the house of doors. Prospero also reads of a room which contains itself which contains itself which contains itself and also of "The Tower of Bible" and "The House of Things We Do Know but Won't Tell" and "The House of Things We Don't Know but Will Discover".

Prospero has read many of Norman Gates' short stories such as "The Frog Prince of Rock", "The Goddess Heqat Chooses her Agent" and "The Jazz Mutiny on the Bounce".

Prospero's theory is that Mister Gates was the gatekeeper of an Egyptian (or possibly American) hotel in the desert. He considers that there were gates in that hotel leading to various "Bardo" or "Barges" which are some sort of ship or perhaps "Vehicle of Illusion" known as a "Blood Body" or "Ba", or sometimes "Tulpa". This "Ba" is connected somehow to the "Ka" and they are both part of the same idea as the "Beer" or "Beir" and was used to permit humans to pass into a life after death. Prospero is still trying to put it all together. There are so many different versions.

One version of "The Book of Gates" is a glossy American paperback containing some of the well known stories by Gates himself. It has a preface by Jack Duluo. Another version is a much older book containing instructions for getting through the gates to the afterlife. These gates are guarded by 42 gods but, according to a Tibetan language version, these gods are mere illusions sent to mislead the unwary dead.

Prospero picks up a smaller book which appears to be incorrectly placed in the Norman Gates section of the library. It is called "*This Book is Covered in Writing*" by Anna Tate. Prospero shrugs his eight shoulders in the rhythm which means "How did that get there?" and moves the book to the shelf labelled "Earth Miscellany".

Prospero returns to his studies of the enigmatic Gates.

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*An odd chapter reads thus:*

In a singular instance of the ancient ways of things occurring in accordance with the patterns of instinctive behaviour of human beings in the coldest season of the year when the nights are long and the days are short and snow may settle upon the cold, cold ground a woman of great power and authority sat in her castle of black, black night weaving and stitching the fates of her family tribe. The tapestry she wove was white as the snow and black as the night.

Quite deliberately she pricked her finger and allowed a few drops of blood to fall onto the tapestry of fate.

At once the tapestry glowed with a life of its own and the weaver knew that the threads had taken magic from the blood and that this was the beginning of a new timeline in the destiny of her tribe.

Sure enough, the woman soon conceived with her husband a girl child who was black as the night and with hair as white as the snow.

They named the child Blood of the Night and brought her up to be a warrior.

Blood of the Night's warrior education began as soon as she could walk and talk. She was introduced to seven tiny men who were experts in manifesting the instincts as symbolic characters. They could form the Mother, the Father, the Unified Syzygy, the Searcher Hermit, the Magician Juggler, the God-Devil, the Life-Death Cross, the Creation-Destruction-Preserver, the Nightmare-Dream, the Hope-Despair, the Chariot Wheels, the Force-Scales-Liberty and all the other known forms of Martial Semiosis.

Blood of the Night studied with the seven tiny men until she was fully grown and had, through miracle of neuroplasticity, become an expert herself. She was now an adept at placing the signified meaning within any available signifier object which came to hand and utterly nullifying any toxic hegemony elements which arranged themselves against her.

Blood of the Night was ready to be the champion of her people.

Accordingly the tribe negotiated to find Blood of the Night employment with a respected firm of solicitors at Canterbury in Kent. She was to be indentured as a clerk. Thus began her alleged misfortunes and misadventures, though she did not, as yet, realise this. In fact she was initially quite happy doing the routine work of data entry and accountancy. She enjoyed meeting the customers who manifested a rich diversity of types and forms, some of them from off-world. Meanwhile the nine centres of her psychophysical structure were processing the knowledge of the forms of the Martial Semiosis and running scenarios in the background.

Elsewhere a tiny lizard entered the city saying, "Charlie the Chap linear slate gagging has beans two trans furs hearth of his so be it price into the fun of the abba pier."

The lizard although very much of the until then otherwise designated second branching form of the totality of derivative without objection from the parliament of the demotically elected substratum of the usually redefined interpretation of well known yet mysteriously underfunded mythic organisation resembling in some ways perhaps a baked and decorated and superimposed with a fruit of the intensively cultivated cherry tree confection of the heart was without any prior prompting or training in such matters of a mind to express his emotional responses to the sights and sounds of the city's famous topography and infrastructure in the simplest possible manner currently available to one of his somewhat meagre hinterland.

On hearing the news Blood of the Night at once fell into a deep faint and passed beyond the veil of mortality, dying and being instantly reborn in carbon fibre armour and drawing forth from the stone of notes the sword of words. She leapt aboard the noble steed of public transport and made her way directly to the lizard's last sighted temporal-spatial coordinates.

The bus pulled into the stop across the road from the little bistro where the lizard was sitting at a table under the naïve misapprehension that he was going to get served. Blood of the Night disembarked and crossed the street to confront the lizard vis à vis.

The lizard, whose name was Fluffy (a name bestowed upon him by his fellow actors on the AmDram circuit), rose to his feet, crossing himself and muttering an invocation to Our Lady of the Orange Dressing Gown. He stood proudly on his hind legs and looked Blood of the Night squarely in the kneecaps. “I suppose you think you’re pretty tough,” He said, “Standing there all aggressive and suchlike”.

She looked at him and narrowed her eyes.

He looked at her and narrowed *his* eyes.

They both tried to narrow their eyes a bit more and ended up going all squinty.

“Okay, enough of this eye-narrowing,” said Blood of the Night, “I’m getting a bit of a headache. Are you ‘Likes old movies, gardening and occasional ballroom dancing?’”

Twitching with surprise and excitement Fluffy the Lizard said, “Yes! Are you ‘Romantically inclined but no time wasters?’”

She nodded. They smiled at each other. It might be the beginning of something good.

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